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Paper Town

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Here I am, sitting upon a flat surface with no control of the world around me. I could be bent, crumpled, or broken, but I have no say in the matter. I am but an inanimate piece of four-by-six paper, ripped out from a student's notebook.

There is nothing written upon me. I am a blank slate, waiting for someone to take a palette and illustrate something upon me.

Oh, how I long to have something written upon my blank skin, like a tattoo with sentimental value larger than words. Any sort of marking, even just the single stroke of a pencil line, will give me meaning and purpose.

Or perhaps I could shift forms. I could be transformed into an airplane and soar across the room. What great heights will I see? How will it feel to have the air hit me as I accelerate higher and higher until gravity finally intervenes and lowers me? I wait in anticipation for something to happen.

But alas, there is no life for me. I am still as blank as a night sky without stars. Anything would be better than lying here against this table, dead to the world, and paralyzed.

Maybe my prayers have been answered because a lamp light abruptly turns on overhead. A human enters the room and is looking down upon me. This is the most joyous moment of my life. I feel overwhelmed with excitement and glee.

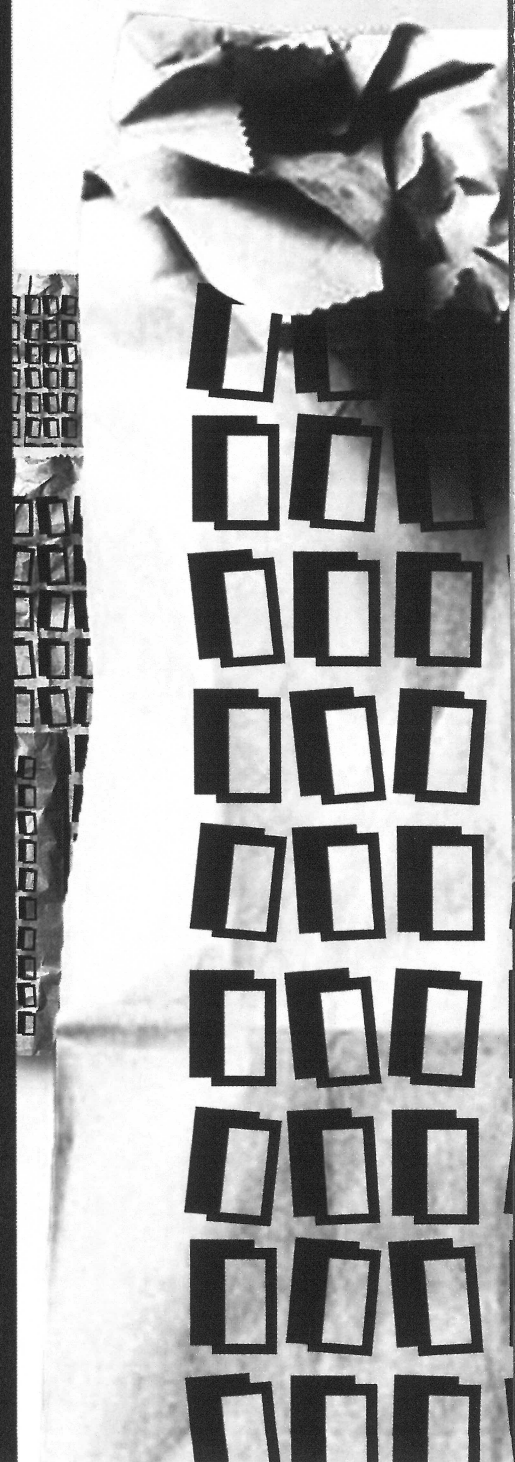
However, before my bliss can fully unravel, I realize that the human has no writing instrument in his hands. He lacks pencil, paint, or anything else that could be used to design me. Instead, he is lifting a heavy-looking machine which he places next to me and plugs into the conveniently located outlet.

Curiously, I stare up at the machine. It appears to be a tall, electronic garbage dispenser. The sleek, grey design reminds me more of a robot than a household device.

Maybe the human is using this device as an inspiration to draw a robot on me. It would be my honor to act as his canvas for a science-fiction diorama. The possibilities are simply limitless! Who knows what kind of imagination that human has running around in his head. I think his imagination is as vast as an open meadow.

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Yet, he seems to be blatantly ignoring me. In fact, he reaches into his bookbag, rummaging for a bit, until he reveals another sheet of paper. How rude! I am perfectly capable on my own. How dare he replace me before giving me a chance!

Much to my surprise, however, the human places this second piece of paper into the overhead machine and presses a button. I watch in sheer horror as the innocent body is torn to shreds in a mere instant.

This is no machine# it is a monster! This is a despicable creature taking helpless victims, chewing them up and spitting them out until their mangled bodies are unidentifiable. If I could move, I would be shuddering in fear at this point.

However, I am just a piece of paper. I cannot move. I cannot scream. All I can do is watch as the human puts more papers through the machine. Poor souls. What did they ever do to deserve this kind of torture? I would never wish that fate upon anyone.

With each buzzing noise of the machine as it devours the papers, more and more panic begins to rise within me. I cannot help but wonder if I am next. Will it hurt? That machine appears to be merciless in its pursuit to destroy all pieces of paper within its path. I realize that without a doubt the process will be painful.

If I could talk, I would shout at the human, begging him to spare me from this grotesque and inhumane practice. I would ask him why he is subjecting me and all of the papers to this unimaginable terror.

Luckily, for now I am saved. The human turns off the overhead lamp, unplugs the beast, and leaves. I am left feeling more thankful and relieved than I have ever been in my entire paper life.

Now, I have come to one conclusion. I should be more careful what I wish for. Earlier, I had said that anything would be better than just lying here on a flat surface, waiting to be drawn upon. I was wrong.